

The New York Times demands a Trump special prosecutor

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In the wake of Monday's hearing before the House Intelligence Committee, in which FBI Director James Comey confirmed that his agency is investigating claims of Russian intervention into the 2016 US presidential election, the *New York Times* has stepped up its campaign to paint the Trump administration as a tool of Moscow.

An editorial in the newspaper's Tuesday edition demands the appointment of an independent counsel by the Department of Justice to probe the alleged connections between the Trump campaign and the Russian government—for which zero evidence has been produced so far—as well as the consolidation of several different congressional investigations into a single special committee on the model of those which investigated the 9/11 attacks, Watergate and the Iran-Contra affair.

It bears repeating that the *Times*, like the Democratic Party for which it speaks, has chosen to focus its opposition to Trump on the most reactionary possible grounds. It does not speak for persecuted immigrants and Muslims, those who will lose healthcare, education or home heating because of Trump's proposed budget cuts, or those who will become victims of his drone strikes and other military assaults. Instead, the *Times* attacks the fascist Trump administration *from the right*, advocating an even more aggressive foreign policy, directed first and foremost against Russia, an approach that carries with it the risk of a world war with nuclear weapons.

The *Times* editorial describes Comey's acknowledgement of the ongoing investigation into the possible connections between the Trump campaign and alleged Russian hacking as “a breathtaking admission,” although the FBI director was merely admitting publicly what the *Times* and other newspapers have

been reporting for months, based on leaks from the intelligence agencies.

The editorial then cites the possibility of political interference with the FBI investigation by Trump appointees in the Justice Department, calling for “appointing an independent prosecutor, who would not take orders from the administration.” The purpose of this proposal is not to produce evidence of a Trump-Russia connection that does not exist, but to create a political mechanism that can be used, like the independent counsel investigation into President Bill Clinton, to destroy an administration.

The editorial was accompanied by a hysterical column by David Leonhardt, given a headline, “All the President's Lies,” deliberately meant to evoke a comparison to Watergate. Leonhardt declares that Trump “lies in ways that no American politician ever has before,” as though Trump was an interloper into a political system characterized by honesty, fair play and other Boy Scout virtues.

Trump's lying may be different in style (tweets) and perhaps volume, but he stands at the head of a political system permeated with lies; from the ceaseless invocations of a “war on terror” as the basis of US foreign policy, to the claim that the United States is the world's leading defender and propagator of “democracy.”

In fact, the *Times*, when it sees fit, has been a willing conduit for the lies of countless presidencies, most notoriously parroting the bald-faced fabrications of the Bush Administration about “weapons of mass destruction” as a justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Leonhardt declares, “Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential campaign was an attack on the United States. It's the kind of national-security matter that a

president and members of Congress swear to treat with utmost seriousness when they take the oath of office.” No one would guess, reading this fevered language, that Leonhardt is referring to alleged Russian hacking of two Democratic Party-linked servers—housing emails of the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta—not to the 9/11 attacks or Pearl Harbor.

That is the substance of the claims of “Russian interference” in the US elections. No ballots were stuffed, no election office computers were ransacked, no gunmen threatened voters going to the polls. Instead, unknown individuals obtained emails and supplied them to WikiLeaks, which revealed efforts by the DNC leadership to help Clinton at the expense of Bernie Sanders, and efforts by Clinton to curry favor with Wall Street audiences. No one has challenged the veracity of these emails. The “interference,” whoever was responsible—and no convincing link to Russia has been demonstrated—amounted to giving American voters a small glimpse of the rotten underbelly of capitalist politics. What a terrible crime!

The *Times* is by no means the only media purveyor of anti-Russian hysteria and warmongering. The *Washington Post*, for example, carried a news article Tuesday that quoted the presidential historian Douglas Brinkley declaring, referring to Trump, “There’s a smell of treason in the air.” It also published a column by former Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson suggesting that the impeachment of Trump was “the only constitutional mechanism that would remove the taint of larceny from the 2016 election.”

But the *Times* sets the tone for a campaign of such unrelieved political filth, whose aim is to divert the growing popular opposition to Trump into the most reactionary possible course, towards bolstering the efforts by the US military-intelligence apparatus and powerful sections of the ruling elite to foment a conflict—potentially leading to full-scale war—with Russia.



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